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CHRIST CHURCH,

PHILADELPHIA.



HISTORICAL SERMON.



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CHRIST CHURCH,

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BY THE RECTOR,

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HISTORICAL SERMON.

DURING this Centennial year, the mind of every American patriot instinctively turns to the past history of the country, and particularly dwells on the period of the struggle which resulted in the formation of these United States.

So short-lived among the nations of the earth, we have yet made our history rapidly ; and the one hundred years of our existence are fraught with memorable and instructive facts. It is on this account that, as we grow older, we become considerate of the "things past," and desire to recall the details of the events which most distinguished our career.

Among all the buildings in the country, around which sacred and national associations cluster, and connected with events on which the mind of the thoughtful American desires to dwell, there is none perhaps more interesting than old Christ Church.

The Parish was organized and the first building erected in 1695 ; twelve years after the laying out of the city by Penn, and during the reign of William III. It was a plain structure, built partly of wood, and partly of brick.

In 1727 the present edifice was built, and during the nine years that the work was in process, the congregation worshipped in the old structure around which the new one rose. The architect was Dr. John Kearsley, to whom the congregation was much indebted for the zeal and interest with which he urged on the enterprise. Copied after the old English type of church architecture ; built of brick from the old country ; it rose a monument to the skill which designed it, and an ornament to the city in which it then stood as a

centre of attraction. As we gaze now on its graceful outline and beautiful proportion, we cannot fail to acknowledge that, for the time in which it was built, the present structure is both remarkable and ornate.

In 1754 the tower and steeple were built, and a chime of eight bells, cast in London, was provided. A portion of the money to defray the expense was raised by a lottery, of which Benjamin Franklin was one of the managers.

When the British took possession of Philadelphia, the bells were removed: and one tradition states that they were sunk in the Delaware River; another, that they were removed to Allentown in this State. After the evacuation of the city by the troops, the bells were placed in their old position; and without any other interval, for nearly a century and a half, they twice on week days, and twice on every Lord's day, have called the people to worship. Their sweet tones have extended into the rapidly growing city, and reminded men in the midst of their daily avocations, and in the quiet of their homes, of the service of Him who made and will judge them.

The work of the building is of a most substantial character, and will outlast many generations of men. Four feet of solid stone, cased with brick, compose the tower. The whole length of the building is 118 feet. The height of the steeple is about 200 feet, and on the top of it are placed a vane, balls, and mitre. The largest ball measures 7 feet 9 inches in circumference, and the four smaller balls (indicating the cardinal points of the compass) are 3 feet 10 inches apart. Upon the mitre are thirteen stars, the number of the original States, and the date of the Consecration to the Episcopate of the Rt. Rev. Wm. White, D.D., Feb. 4th, 1787.

In the building itself no alteration has been made. In 1836 (the year in which Bishop White died), a floor was put down over the old pavement and tombstones in the aisles, and new furniture took the place of the old in the body of the Church. Under the Chancel two of the former Clergy are buried, and in the aisles several whose names were famous in ante-revolutionary days. The old pulpit, made by John

Folwell in 1770, without the sounding-board, remains; and in 1869 it was placed near the original spot, being removed from the middle of the Chancel where for so many years its position had marred the noble proportions of the building. The prayer desks are made from the original high desk, and the old Communion Table is under the present Altar.

The Font, in which Bishop White, Francis Hopkinson, and a long list of worthies were baptized, was, in 1865, brought from the resting-place into which for over seventy years it had been thrust, to give way for a new one presented in 1789 by Jonathan Gostelowe. The beautiful silver bowl, weighing over sixty-three ounces, presented in 1712 by Col. Robert Quarry, of the British army, is still used in it.

Three of the Communion Vessels were presented in 1708 by Queen Ann, and are thus inscribed: "Anna Regina, in usum Ecclesiæ Anglicanæ apud Philadelphiam." There are seven other pieces, some with no date, but probably in use in 1695. One is peculiarly beautiful, and engraved with the figures of six of the apostles, viz., St. Petrus, St. Paulus, St. Joannes, St. Jacobus, St. Matthæus, St. Thomas, and marked $\overset{m}{I \times K}$.

A committee of the Vestry was appointed in 1869 to collect and arrange the relics of ante-revolutionary date of interest in the old building; and, among the most interesting, we would name the coat of arms of Great Britain, which was placed over the Governor's pew in Colonial days; a bust of one of the kings of England (probably of George III.) placed over the east end of the church building, on Second Street, and removed soon after the Declaration of Independence was read. On this occasion, the *first* Fourth of July oration was delivered. Tradition says it was so effective that immediately a ladder was raised, and the relics so obnoxious to the young republican ideas, removed.

The old chandelier, purchased in London in 1744, was brought from the steeple where it had lain since 1836, and through the liberality of a citizen of Philadelphia, was repaired, and hung in its old place, in 1870. There is also an old hatchment of Robert Smythe, who died in 1808, and

was, in ante-revolutionary days, the Chief Justice in New Jersey, under the appointment of the British Crown. It was probably borne before the funeral cortege from his residence in Union Street, and placed in the Church, where it has remained ever since. The only other hatchment now extant in this country, is one of the Izzard family of South Carolina, still preserved in the old "Goose Creek Church" of that State.

The burying-ground at Fifth and Arch Streets, in which so many thousand bodies have been interred, still remains; while nearly all of the other old resting-places for the dead have given place to the rapid increase of trade, and the development of the city.

The names of many of the "illustrious dead" are recorded on the list which it contains, but I will name only those of Benj. Franklin, John Nixon, Peyton Randolph, the President of the first Continental Congress, Francis Hopkinson, Chief Justice Tilghman, Commodores Biddle and Dale; and, of still later date, Gen. McCall and Wm. M. Meredith.

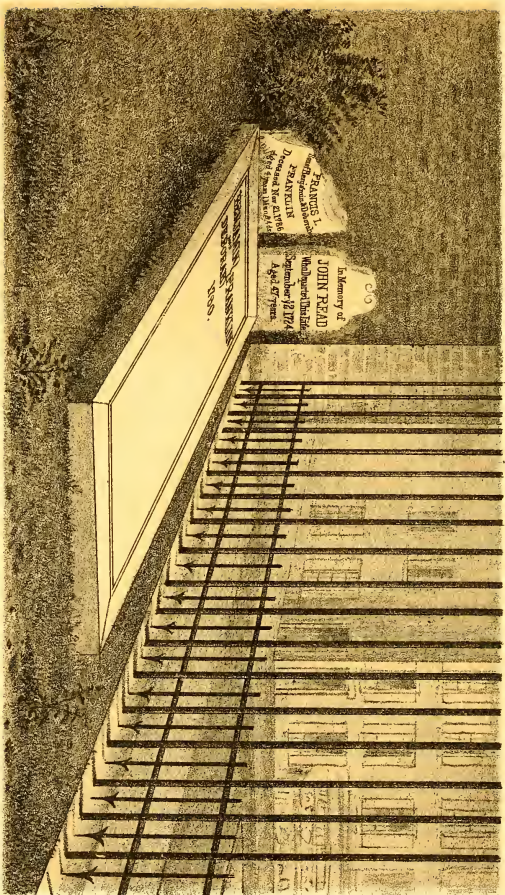
There is vested in the corporation of the Parish the property of "Christ Church Hospital," an institution founded in 1772 by Dr. John Kearsley, for the benefit of gentlewomen,—those who through the reverses of fortune have been brought from plenty to penury. The widows of Clergymen are to have precedence among these.

By careful management, the original endowment (which by the words of the will of Dr. Kearsley provides for five or six gentlewomen) has become sufficient to support fifty of the daughters of the Church, who now enjoy its munificence. We have no doubt that in the future, as the endowment by similar judicious administration increases, it will support one hundred and fifty or more in the noble structure provided for the purpose.

The present site of Christ Church Hospital is on Belmont Avenue, about one mile north of George's Hill; and the Managers have erected there for the pious purpose of the founder, one of the noblest buildings in the country. The present structure was begun in 1856. The inmates were

GRAVE OF FRANKLIN.

From Turner's 1838, 7th ed.



removed to it from the old building in Cherry Street above Third in 1860. It has a frontage of 237 feet, and the depth of wing is 100 feet. A beautiful Chapel, nicely furnished, forms a part of it, in which the services of the Church, with weekly Communion, are celebrated by the Chaplain, who is a grandson of Bishop White, and bears the name of his illustrious ancestor,—the Rev. Wm. White Bronson.

The charity funds of the Church are large, and the Rector distributes among the worthy poor of the Parish about \$1200 every year. The principal amounts were left by Miss Mary Andrews, who died in 1761, and to whose memory a tablet is erected on the south side of the Church, and Mr. Henry Rigby, whose will is dated April 28th, 1823.

Miss Clifton, in 1816, left by her will an amount for “teaching six boys as a choir to sing in Christ Church.” It is now worth about \$1400.

The first organ of which mention is made was put up in 1728. This gave place to a larger in 1776, which in turn gave place to the one now in use in 1836. The last was made by Erben, and, though wanting in some of the modern additions, is an instrument of great power and beauty of tone.

The Endowment Fund to which allusion is made in the “Memorials of Christ Church,” published by the late Rector in 1862, was started very soon after, and through the energy of the late Mr. Edward Clark, Warden of the Parish, was carried forward with great zeal, and now amounts to about \$43,000. It is the desire of those most interested in the old Parish to increase it still more, so that in time the Church may be made free, and thus able to accomplish fully its work among the poor of the neighborhood.

The records of the Church, so far as preserved, are perfect, and constant reference is made to them by those interested in the discovery of family history. A portion of the most early was destroyed by fire, and some of the records of the official acts of the Rev. Mr. Coombe were taken to England by him when he fled thither at the breaking out of the Revolutionary War. The present Rector is endeavoring to obtain them from some one of his descendants.

The General Convention again assembled here in July, 1789. Bishop White presided—and Francis Hopkinson was the secretary.

On the 16th of October, 1789, the Book of Common Prayer for the American Church was ratified here, and “required to be received as such by all its members.” In the library is a copy of the Prayer Book published in Oxford, with the alterations made in the handwriting of Bishop White.

Think of the changes which have taken place since that time! The “little one” of 1789 has become a “strong nation” in 1876! For some years after the Revolutionary War, there was only one Clergyman in this State, and that was the Rev. Wm. White of this Parish. Now there are in this State three Bishops and three hundred and twenty Clergymen, two hundred and eighty-nine Church buildings, and numerous efficient Church charities. At the first General Convention held in this Church in 1789, there were present two Bishops and seventeen Clergymen; now we have in the Church forty-one Dioceses, eight Missionary jurisdictions, fifty-two Bishops, and over three thousand Clergymen.

This wonderful increase was in the very face of violent opposition and bitter prejudice, against which, for a time, the progress was slow. Now the advance is steady and rapid; and it is to-day, as it ever has been in the history of our country, that among the most illustrious and honored names are to be found, prominently, the sons of the Church.

Several mural tablets have been placed in the Church of late.

The window of stained glass placed in the Chancel end of the Church in 1836, began to show signs of decay, and as the need of some memorial to Bishop White had long been realized and talked of, it was determined in 1870 to replace it with one which should commemorate the fact of his bringing to these shores the line of the Episcopate, thereby fulfilling the promise of the Master, to be with His Church “always.”

Through the earnest work of the Ladies’ Missionary Society of this Parish, the money was raised to build Calvary Church, at the corner of Front and Margaretta Streets, as a monu-

ment to the memory of Bishop White. The Society gave it into the hands of a Vestry, who carried on the mission work for several years, but in 1871 were obliged to re-convey it to the Society, and it was then placed in the keeping of the Vestry of this Parish. The Church is free, and the work in the neighborhood is of a strictly missionary character. At present it is carried on most efficiently by the Rev. Thomas Poole Hutchinson.

For many years the matter of the erection of a Chapel in the western portion of the city, whither the members of this congregation were gradually moving, was considered. Several plans were proposed, but none carried into effect. In 1871 services were begun by the Rev. G. Woolsey Hodge, the Assistant Minister of the Parish, and have been since regularly maintained. It is hoped that a site for the erection of a suitable building will soon be obtained.

The first attempt to start a Sunday School in this Parish was made on Sunday, February 18, 1816. In 1838 Mr. Henry Pratt bequeathed to the Church "an annuity of \$100 for twelve years for the support of the Sunday School." In March, 1845, Miss Sarah Hutchins left \$600 for the same object. She also gave to the Vestry, in trust, a ground-rent of \$1066, with which, "together with other gifts," they could obtain a suitable place for the School. The old building on Legrange Street proved to be too small and too badly ventilated. In 1870 the Vestry, after trying in vain to obtain suitable ground for a reasonable price, determined to erect a Parish building on the ground of the Church. This was accomplished at a cost of about \$20,000; and to-day we have fine, well-lighted, well-ventilated rooms for the use of the main school, the Bible classes, the infant school, and the Parish school. The number of the scholars on the roll of the Sunday School is 427.

I cannot close this review of the history of our old Parish without stating, in acknowledgment of God's mercy to it, that there is no indebtedness of any kind whatever, and that there are peace and harmony in the administration of its affairs. Situated, as the Parish is, in the midst of the business activity of the city, it loses, from removals particularly,



CALVARY MONUMENTAL CHURCH.

year by year. Yet the number of communicants is still large (377), and the amount of the missionary work accomplished in the neighborhood, considerable. During my connection with the Parish I have baptized 114 adults and 555 children; have prepared 372 persons for confirmation; solemnized 115 marriages; and officiated at about 533 funerals.

Protestants of nearly every name, in the immediate vicinity, look to old Christ Church for ministration; and its Parish Schools and Sunday Schools, its Employment Society, Dorcas Society, and other appliances for active work, continue to aid those who are in "sickness, need, or any other affliction."

It is remarkable how few Rectors this Parish has had since its inception in 1695. The first was the Rev. Mr. Clayton, who was sent out in that year by the Bishop of London, and died two years after of a disease caught in visiting the sick. The Rev. Evan Evans, D.D. became Rector in 1700, and continued so for eighteen years. He was followed by the Rev. John Vicary, who had the charge from 1719 to 1722. He was followed by the Rev. Richard Welton, D.D., who was the Rector for two years. The Rev. Archibald Cummings followed from 1726 to 1741. The Rev. Robert Jenny, LL.D. took the charge of the Parish in 1742, and remained to 1762. He was followed by the Rev. Richard Peters, D.D., who remained from 1762 to 1775. The remains of the two last named rest in the middle aisle of the Church. The Rev. Jacob Duchè, D.D. was Rector for two years. He was the brother-in-law of Francis Hopkinson, and made the opening prayer in the first Continental Congress. Afterwards his faith in the success of the Revolution wavered; he left the country, and went to England. He returned, however, but had no further connection with this Parish. He died January 3, 1798, and his remains are interred in the burial ground of St. Peter's Church. The Rev. William White was his successor, and he remained the Rector from 1779 to 1836. The career of this illustrious Prelate is too well known to need any particular notice in this brief review. In the War of Independence he was the Chaplain of Congress; and again, by the choice of the Senate, under the Federal Constitution,

during the time that Washington was the President, and the seat of government continued in this city, acted in that honorable capacity. Truly, as a patriot and churchman both, his name shines brightly on the historic page.

The Rev. John Waller James, who assisted the Bishop for four years, was elected by the Vestry to succeed him in the Rectorship. Mr. James died, however, four weeks after his honored predecessor, and never officiated as the Rector of the Parish. The Rev. Benjamin Dorr, D.D. succeeded him, and was elected on the 9th day of March, 1837. For thirty-two years he filled the office; and died in the city on September 18th, 1869. The present Rector was elected to succeed him, and really makes only the eleventh in the line of succession since 1695.

I have thus hastily completed my task, and taken a review of the history of this time-honored and historic building. I cannot speak of the numbers who received, in this Font, the sign of the everlasting covenant, whose feet have trodden these aisles as they drew near to participate in the emblems of the Saviour's love in dying for us; of those who have been united here for better or for worse, till death them did part; and of the prayers and praises and alms that together have ascended here, for so many years, as a memorial before God. Those venerable bells have rung out the old year and rung in the new with its divers changes; have called the solemn assembly on the Lord's day; marked the holy festivals of the Church; and sounded too the requiem over the mortal remains of many of those who have died in the Lord.

Think of these things to-day, and, as you join in the prayer which commemorates the Church triumphant with the Church militant, pray in very truth, that we, together with them, may be partakers of life everlasting.

